



January 31, 2003

## **Do We Need to Reinstate the Draft to Insure “Shared Sacrifice”?**

**– *Data Shows Fairness of the All-Volunteer Force* –**

Under the banner of “shared sacrifice,” Representative Charles Rangel (D-NY) and Senator Fritz Hollings (D-SC) have proposed to reinstate the draft (H.R. 163 and S. 89, introduced 01/07/03). “I believe that if we are going to send our children to war, the governing principle must be that of shared sacrifice,” Mr. Rangel wrote in a *New York Times* op-ed published December 31. Representative Rangel further asserts that “the burden of military service [is] being borne disproportionately by members of disadvantaged groups,” and Senator Hollings claims that “if military action is considered necessary, the burden of carrying out that action must not be limited to any one segment of the population.”<sup>1</sup>

These assertions have a notable flaw: they are not based on facts. They ignore Defense Department and other private-sector studies that show that no group of Americans is dramatically over-represented in today’s military. Moreover, Senator Hollings and Congressman Rangel confuse the statistics of those who serve in the military’s enlisted ranks with those likely to serve in the front lines in the event of war. Just as important, they ignore the fact that some minority service members stay enlisted longer because they find the military a fairer and better place to work than the civilian sector.

### ***The Birth of the All Volunteer Force***

In February 1970, President Nixon created a commission to study the best means to procure military personnel. The Report of the President’s Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force (better known as the Gates Commission) concluded that an all-volunteer force was feasible, affordable, and would enhance the nation’s security. The All Volunteer Force (AVF) was instituted in July 1973 following the Vietnam War, after much debate within the Nixon Administration and the Congress. Today the U.S. armed forces are widely considered to be the most technologically advanced, best-trained and best-equipped military in the world.

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<sup>1</sup> Senator Hollings’ quotation is from a January 24, 2003 press advisory; Congressman Rangel’s quotation is from a December 30, 2002 press release.

It bears repeating that today's U.S. military is a *volunteer* force, and that individuals freely choose to serve their country and to bear this "burden." This paper does not address the age-old debate of whether conscription in a time of war is appropriate to help ensure that all of the nation's citizens equally bear the burdens of fighting and casualties in war or whether the draft is necessary to meet a surge capacity or national emergency (which is why the Selective Service system operates on a standby status); rather, it is limited to demonstrating that the current makeup of the military – among those who choose to wear the uniform – is not in itself a valid argument for reinstating the draft.

## **U.S. Armed Forces Not Disproportionately Poor or Uneducated**

Congressman Rangel expresses concern for disadvantaged groups who will be "placed in harm's way," asserting disproportionate risk to the poor and minorities. More than three decades ago, the Gates Commission, prophetically, disputed claims that reliance on volunteers would lead to a mercenary force consisting mainly of minorities, the poor, and the uneducated. In fact, the makeup of U.S. armed forces is far from disproportionately "underclass."

Recent data gathered by the Defense Department shows that in terms of socioeconomic background, the enlisted force is generally representative of the civilian population; the differences are "not dramatic."<sup>2</sup> The Defense Department, looking at its own internally collected data, says that with respect to parents' education, employment, and occupation, only modest differences exist between military enlisted accessions and the recruit-age population. For example, the percentages of recruits who have parents with a high school degree (or higher) is virtually identical to that of the recruit-age population. One of the DoD studies looked at mothers' and fathers' employment status and found 24 percent of the employed fathers of new recruits were likely to be in "executive, managerial, administrative, or professional" occupations – the four top occupational categories – compared to 34 percent of all civilians in the same age range. The same study revealed even closer comparisons with the employment status of the mothers: 29 percent of the recruits had mothers in the highest occupational categories compared to 33 percent of all civilians in the same age range.

Another more elaborate and technical DoD study indicates that "enlisted accessions come from all socioeconomic levels." However, the study does note a "tendency for access to come from families in the lower three-quarters of the status distribution."<sup>3</sup> Recall, these DOD studies involve the makeup of enlisted service members only. It can be argued that including officers in the data brings the overall

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<sup>2</sup>Robert Goldich, "The Military Draft and a Possible War With Iraq," Congressional Research Service, p. 13., 12/31/02.

<sup>3</sup>Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Force Management Policy), "Population Representation in the Military Services, Fiscal Year 1999," November 2000.

picture into greater balance because 96 percent of officers are college-educated and come more from middle- and higher-income backgrounds. (Note that black college graduates currently make up 8 percent of all graduates – the same percent as black officers in the services.<sup>4</sup>)

As to education, the standard with All Volunteer Force recruits is that they are high-school graduates with above-average aptitude. Ninety percent of new recruits have a high school diploma, compared to only 75 percent of American youth.<sup>5</sup>

## **No Class of Soldiers Disproportionately Placed in “Harm’s Way”**

The Gates Commission, 30 years ago, rejected concerns about a volunteer force becoming “too black,” arguing that policy makers should accept whatever proportion of minorities the market dictated. Yet today, are members of minority groups who choose to serve their country in the armed forces placed more in harm’s way than their fellow soldiers, as draft advocates imply? According to recent data compiled by the Defense Department:

- Black recruits comprise 20 percent of non-prior service enlistees and 22 percent of the active duty enlisted force, versus 12-14 percent of the civilians of comparable age, but comprise 15 percent of combat arms (for example, infantry, artillery and armor).
- In fact, blacks tend to concentrate more in administrative and support jobs rather than combat jobs. For example, blacks account for 36 percent of Functional Support and Administration and 27 percent of Medical and Dental career fields.<sup>6</sup>
- Hispanics are 9 percent of enlisted personnel in FY2000, compared to 13 percent of the total U.S. population in the comparable age group (18-44).<sup>7</sup>
- Women constitute 50 percent of the population and about 15 percent of enlisted personnel.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Force Management Policy), *Population Representation in the Military Services, FY2000*.

<sup>5</sup>*Conscription Threatens Hard-Won Achievements and Military Readiness* (Office of the UnderSecretary of Defense, Personnel and Readiness), January 9, 2003.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Force Management Policy), *Population Representation in the Military Services, FY2000*.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

### ***Desert Storm Casualties Consistent With Occupational Duties***

Casualty trends in Desert Storm were consistent with occupational patterns, with blacks accounting for 23 percent of military personnel deployed to the Gulf, yet accounting for only 17 percent of the combat or non-combat deaths. Whites, who comprised 71 percent of the U.S. forces in theater accounted for 76 percent of the deaths. Hispanics, who were 4 percent of the forces, constituted 4 percent of the deaths.<sup>9</sup>

### ***The Myth of Minorities as “Cannon Fodder” for Front-line Units***

Tom Ricks, now a defense reporter for the *Washington Post*, in 1997 wrote for the *Wall Street Journal* to expose what he called an “old stereotype about the Army’s front-line units being cannon fodder laden with minorities.” Rather, he wrote, that the infantry – which typically suffers the greatest casualties in war – had become “whiter than America.” Black Americans constitute 9 percent of the infantry, compared to 11.8 percent of the civilian population aged 18-44. Ricks asserted that white males, often seeking adventure while earning money for college, tend to migrate to the combat arms, especially to elite units like the Rangers and airborne, while young black males, seeking job skills, tend to “gravitate toward administrative and technical jobs.”<sup>10</sup>

Six years after Ricks’ report, the numbers have barely changed: 10.6 percent of the Army’s enlisted combat infantrymen today are black.

### **DoD Surveys Show Minorities See Benefits from Military Service**

The Department of Defense observes that some minorities stay enlisted longer because they find the military a fairer and better place to work than the civilian sector. The most recent of the Defense Department’s personnel surveys, the Armed Forces Equal Opportunity Survey,<sup>11</sup> reveals that minorities believe they have more freedom from harassment, more freedom from discrimination, are more likely to receive fair administration of criminal justice, have a greater chance to show pride in themselves, have a better chance for fair performance evaluations, and have greater opportunity for education and training.

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<sup>9</sup>*Conscription Threatens Hard-Won Achievements and Military Readiness.*

<sup>10</sup>Ricks, Tom, “About Face: U.S. Infantry Surprise – It’s Now Mostly White; Blacks Hold Office Jobs,” *Wall Street Journal*, January 1997.

<sup>11</sup>DoD “Equal Opportunity Survey” conducted by the Defense Manpower Data Center from September 1996-February 1997.

The current military allows for individual choice and reflects the nation's ethnic diversity; a conscription army affords no such freedom. Minorities overall, according to the Defense Department's Quality of Life Survey, believe the armed forces offer an environment that affords equality of treatment and opportunity without regard to race, color, religion, or national origin.<sup>12</sup>

## **Reinstating the Draft Would Not Benefit Disadvantaged Groups**

Who would benefit from reinstatement of the draft? Former Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger recently offered this vignette: "Once, early in 1982, President Reagan and I reviewed a force of young American soldiers newly enrolled. Afterwards, he said to me, 'You know, Cap, I would infinitely rather look each of these young people in the eye and know that each wants to be here.'"<sup>13</sup>

A Report for Congress issued by the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service comments on the logical outcome of those who espouse social equity in the military – that it could suggest the imposition of racial quotas. Such a policy would then penalize capable minority youth who may enlist due to lack of perceived civilian opportunities, or force the military to turn away high-quality recruits to make room for less capable ones.<sup>14</sup> Do lawmakers wish to force more Hispanics and women into the service in the search for a mirror image of society? High-quality recruits include many minorities who choose military service for a variety of reasons, among them patriotism, family tradition, and skills and education that can translate to the civilian sector. The premise of those who want to resurrect the draft – that today's armed forces disproportionately put the poor and members of minority groups in harm's way (otherwise, why is military service a "burden"? ) – is demonstrably false.

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<sup>12</sup>DoD "Quality of Life Survey," 1999.

<sup>13</sup>*Wall Street Journal*, "Dodgy Drafters," January 11, '03.

<sup>14</sup>Goldich, p. 14.